

Amendments to claims - November 1, 2006

Claims 1-26 cancelled

27. (currently amended) Article feeding apparatus of the type in which flat articles such as sheets are moved downstream along an article flow path, including a prompter for moving articles along the flow path, wherein the prompter comprises:

a shaft, extending transversely to the flow path;

a first roller, mounted on the shaft;

a body, having a first end and second end lying along the body length; the first end pivotably engaged with the shaft proximate the first roller;

a second roller, mounted at the second end of the body;

a belt, mounted on and endlessly running around the first and second rollers, having a surface which frictionally engages and moves downstream an article along the flow path, when the body second end is positioned upstream of the first end;

means for moving the belt around the rollers and thus rotating the rollers; and,

means for imparting to the body a first moment created by a rotary friction force applied directly to the body; wherein the first moment urges the body to rotate around the shaft and thereby press at the second roller end against any article lying along the flow path;

wherein said frictional engagement of the belt with an article moving downstream along the flow path, due to the motion of the belt running around the rollers, imparts to the body a second moment,

distinct from the first moment, which urges the body to rotate in the same direction as the first moment;

~~The apparatus of claim 26~~ wherein the means for moving the belt comprises a first roller driven by rotation of the shaft; and, wherein the body first end is bifurcated to straddle the first roller and frictionally engage the rotating shaft, thereby to create said first moment.

28. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the belt is made of elastomer and is stretched between the rollers, so tension in the belt holds the body in frictional and pivotable engagement with the shaft, to thereby create said first moment.

29. cancelled

30. (currently amended) Article feeding apparatus of the type in which flat articles such as sheets are moved downstream along an article flow path, including a prompter for moving articles along the flow path, wherein the prompter comprises:

a shaft, extending transversely to the flow path;

a first roller, mounted on the shaft;

a body, having a first end and second end lying along the body length; the first end pivotably engaged with the shaft proximate the first roller;

a second roller, mounted at the second end of the body;

a belt, mounted on and endlessly running around the first and second rollers, having a surface which frictionally engages and moves downstream an article along the flow path, when the body second end is positioned upstream of the first end;

means for moving the belt around the rollers and thus rotating the rollers; and,

means for imparting to the body a first moment created by a rotary friction force applied directly

to the body; wherein the first moment urges the body to rotate around the shaft and thereby press at the second roller end against any article lying along the flow path;

wherein said frictional engagement of the belt with an article moving downstream along the flow path, due to the motion of the belt running around the rollers, imparts to the body a second moment, distinct from the first moment, which urges the body to rotate in the same direction as the first moment;

~~The apparatus of claim 26~~ wherein, the article flow path lies along a plane; further comprising a shingled stack of sheets lying along said plane; wherein the prompter second roller lies above the stack at an elevation higher than the elevation of the first roller and higher than the elevation of said plane.

31. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 26 wherein the belt has a surface comprised of a plurality of transverse ribs with cross sections which make the ribs substantially deflectable when the belt pulls an article along the flow path.

32. (currently amended) Article feeding apparatus of the type in which flat articles such as sheets are moved downstream along an article flow path, including a prompter for moving articles along the flow path, wherein the prompter comprises:

a shaft, extending transversely to the flow path;

a first roller, mounted on the shaft;

a body, having a first end and second end lying along the body length; the first end pivotably engaged with the shaft proximate the first roller;

a second roller, mounted at the second end of the body;

a belt, mounted on and endlessly running around the first and second rollers, having a surface which frictionally engages and moves downstream an article along the flow path, when the body

second end is positioned upstream of the first end;

means for moving the belt around the rollers and thus rotating the rollers; and

means for imparting to the body a first moment created by a rotary friction force applied directly to the body; wherein the first moment urges the body to rotate around the shaft and thereby press at the second roller end against any article lying along the flow path;

wherein, the belt has a surface comprised of a plurality of transverse ribs with cross sections which make the ribs substantially deflectable when the belt pulls an article along the flow path; ~~The apparatus of claim 31 and~~ wherein each rib in said plurality of ribs has a cross section which is rectangular and has a height to width aspect ratio of between about 1.3:1 and 4:1.

Claims 33-38 cancelled

39. (currently amended) Article feeding apparatus of the type in which flat articles such as sheets are moved downstream along an article flow path, including a prompter for moving articles along the flow path, wherein the prompter comprises:

a shaft, extending transversely to the flow path;

a first roller, mounted on the shaft;

a body, having a first end and second end lying along the body length; the first end pivotably engaged with the shaft proximate the first roller;

a second roller, mounted at the second end of the body;

a belt, mounted on and endlessly running around the first and second rollers, having a surface which frictionally engages and moves downstream an article along the flow path, when the body second end is positioned upstream of the first end;

means for moving the belt around the rollers and thus rotating the rollers; and

means for imparting to the body a first moment created by a rotary friction force applied directly to the body; wherein the first moment urges the body to rotate around the shaft and thereby press at the second roller end against any article lying along the flow path;

wherein said frictional engagement of the belt with an article moving downstream along the flow path, due to the motion of the belt running around the rollers, imparts to the body a second moment, distinct from the first moment, which urges the body to rotate in the same direction as the first moment;~~The article feeding apparatus of claim 26,~~

-the apparatus further comprising:

two opposing sidewalls, one each on either side of said flow path;

opposing mounting blocks, one each block slidably and detachably mounted on an opposing sidewall;

wherein the shaft is journaled at opposing ends in the mounting blocks; wherein, each block is vertically slidable along its respective sidewall, to enable adjustment of the vertical position of each end of the shaft;

resilient means for pressing each mounting block downwardly toward the sidewall ; and,

screw adjustment means associated with each mounting block, for causing the mounting block to move vertically in opposition to downward force of said resilient means.

Claims 40-44 cancelled

45. (currently amended) Article feeding apparatus of the type in which flat articles such as sheets are moved downstream along an article flow path, including a prompter for moving articles along the flow path, wherein the prompter comprises:

a shaft, extending transversely to the flow path;

a first roller, mounted on the shaft;

a body, having a first end and second end lying along the body length; the first end pivotably engaged with the shaft proximate the first roller;

a second roller, mounted at the second end of the body;

a belt, mounted on and endlessly running around the first and second rollers, having a surface which frictionally engages and moves downstream an article along the flow path, when the body second end is positioned upstream of the first end;

means for moving the belt around the rollers and thus rotating the rollers; and,

means for imparting to the body a first moment created by a rotary friction force applied directly to the body; wherein the first moment urges the body to rotate around the shaft and thereby press at the second roller end against any article lying along the flow path;

wherein, the belt has a surface comprised of a plurality of transverse ribs with cross sections which make the ribs substantially deflectable when the belt pulls an article along the flow path;
and, The article of claim 31

wherein each rib in said plurality of ribs has a cross section which is triangular and has a height to width aspect ratio of between about 2:1 and 4:1.